

# social smarts

## What to consider when posting in election season.

You may have questions on posting to social channels near Election Day. Whether you want insight on posting about issues and the election itself, or want to know the best way to post company topics during the election, here are some answers to some of your questions.

### **Q: Is it OK to post an election-related opinion on behalf of our company?**

**A:** Remember that what gets posted on your brand channels should be a reflection of your company and its values. Meanwhile, employees should also be made aware of their company's point of view before seeing the post(s) on social media along with everyone else.

*Followers are likely to visit your website or owned channels to further confirm how your posted views are embedded and cascade across your company. Employees should not be taken off guard; fully inform them of your position and plans to share with the public. You do not want to post a position and then have it contradicted by another message on your website or via employee communications.*

### **Q: Is it OK to post company news or a product launch around the election?**

**A:** Be cognizant of the current tone and landscape before posting preplanned content. Examine whether it makes sense and if it is still appropriate to make any big announcements during key election periods. Plus it can likely get overshadowed by the election itself.

*As always, make sure any planned posts are appropriate to share, given the current tone, and be mindful of any sensitivities of current events. Pay attention to the overall sentiment on social before posting well-intentioned, but potentially overzealous, content to avoid being seen as insensitive or tone-deaf to the current happenings. In turn, evaluate whether it is still appropriate or timely to push big announcements such as company happenings or product launches as this information is likely to be overshadowed by election commentary.*

### **Q: Is it OK to voice frustrations on social about election opinions and/or potential outcomes?**

**A:** If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.

*Social has become a dumping ground for negative opinions; leading with one is only going to encourage more. Plus it can create a conversation that goes well beyond the original topic of the post that sometimes becomes personal rather than professional or cordial. The safe play is for brands to stay above this by keeping a positive tone and setting the stage for a positive experience with customers.*

### **Q: Our company wants to remain candidate neutral but would like to encourage voting and participation during the election. What is the best way to do that?**

**A:** Encouraging civic duty is a good thing. Keep in mind it can also spark conversations beyond neutral encouragement, given the sensitivities and opinions of others.

*Keep the conversation neutral if this happens and avoid directly responding to or debating with statements you don't align with. For example, reminding people they can vote early and/or linking them to where they can find their polling place. It is OK to remind audiences that the post is intended to be nonpolitical and candidate neutral. If your posts supply third-party links as resources or leverage hashtags, be sure that they are also neutral, come from objective sources and are not aligned to a political entity.*

### **Q: We haven't shared a POV yet, should we do so now?**

**A:** If you didn't share political views before, now is not the time to do so.

*You can expect to see an influx of social activity around the election across personal, media, entertainment and branded accounts. And while there may be a temptation to follow along, remember that if your brand has yet to engage in this conversation, consider what your long-term strategy is rather than jumping in with a one-off remark. Doing so can come across as disingenuous and may not be something your company is prepared to manage unless you have thought through your response strategy and how your position is reflected across your company.*

### **Q: Can we encourage employees to post or not post on their personal channels during the election?**

**A:** The level of oversight a company has on its employees' personal social media channels varies by state, but for the most part, a company cannot force employees to post specific messages to their personal channels, nor can they penalize them for the content they choose to post.

*An employer has the right to discipline employees for their online behavior during working hours and can intervene when an employee's online actions are placing the employer at legal risk.*

**For additional social tips and insights, contact Jamie Gyerman, director, channel strategy at akhia communications.**

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